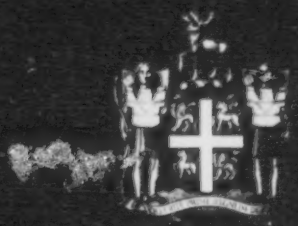

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Speech from the Throne

March 22, 2006

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Delivered at the Opening of
The Third Session of the Forty Fifth
General Assembly of the
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
on Wednesday, March 22, 2006

by His Honour
The Honourable Edward Roberts, ONL, QC
Lieutenant Governor of
Newfoundland and Labrador

A Bold New Attitude

Mr. Speaker, Members of the House of Assembly and people of Newfoundland and Labrador:

A bold new attitude has taken hold in Newfoundland and Labrador – an attitude that considers a challenge an opportunity for triumph, not an omen of defeat.

Nowhere has this new attitude manifested itself with more fire than on the icy rinks of Pinerolo, where our province's Olympians have spun granite rocks into gold. The passion that lived there at the Torino Games was born and nurtured right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in that international arena, it burned with searing intensity in the gold medal performances of Brad Gushue, Mark Nichols, Russ Howard, Jamie Korab and Mike Adam. Newfoundland and Labrador salutes the first Newfoundland and Labrador based team to stand atop the Winter Olympics podium. These are the torchbearers of a new generation of heroes whose sights are now set on Vancouver and Beijing and a thousand other arenas of endeavour: athletic, academic, artistic, technological, commercial. Newfoundland and Labrador is not intimidated by any competition because we are confident in our capacity to shine like gold among the very best.

My Government entered office in 2003 facing challenges of Olympic proportions: public sector debt, unfunded pensions, poverty, an aging populace, outward migration, unemployment, deteriorating infrastructure. To those of the old attitude, these challenges were omens of defeat, harbingers of disaster, reasons to give up. But to those of the new attitude that now fuels the fires of optimism in our province, they have become opportunities to prove ourselves capable of turning the corner toward a new era of sustainability and self-reliance in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My Government took the initiative, beginning in 2003, by building a partnership with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement a comprehensive and far-reaching eight-year **blueprint for economic and social development**. People embraced the opportunity to work with My Government to pull our province from the quicksand of decline and ground ourselves firmly on the bedrock of growth based on a new approach to governance.

By working together as a Government and a people with a common vision, a common plan of action and raw determination, Newfoundland and Labrador has made significant progress to date. The people of our province are to be commended for participating in the hard work required to subdue the fiscal dragon that was threatening to consume us all. The tremendous fiscal progress we have made together is among our greatest achievements – an achievement that will allow My Government to reinvest back into the province rather than be overwhelmed by debt and interest. My First Minister is to be commended for taking the lead in fighting relentlessly for fairness in the allocation of offshore revenues and returning home in triumph many arduous months later with a monumental new agreement on the Atlantic Accord. Newfoundland and Labrador is today celebrating the black-gold victory that has provided to our province a fairer share of the return on the oil and gas that saturates the caverns of our continental shelf. My First Minister has also been successful in bringing home new agreements to strengthen our health care sector, the equalization program and our province's Aboriginal communities and in many other initiatives that have made Newfoundland and Labrador stronger than it was. Together, these gains will enable investments that will strengthen health care, education, justice, rural communities and public infrastructure and lay the foundation for further economic growth.

While the challenges are not yet behind us, the light at the end of the tunnel is today brighter and nearer than when My Government began. And perhaps more importantly, there is at play in our province today a new way of thinking – bold, proud, confident, ready to compete and ready to lead. My Government will be delivering early this year on many of the planning exercises initiated two years ago as part of a comprehensive prosperity agenda – specifically, the Innovation Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy – and, having already delivered the White Paper on Post-secondary Education, will be advancing work this year on the Immigration Strategy and completing the Energy Plan. Great things are happening. Newfoundland and Labrador will make further significant progress on its eight-year blueprint for sustainability and self-reliance. The gains we make together will greatly benefit, not only our people today, but also our children tomorrow. Together, we can build a bright future for our children here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Knowledge and Skills Development

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

My Government entered office with an agenda and a mandate to promote economic development. Without question, the cornerstone of a thriving economy is a well-educated workforce. Starting in childhood and continuing for life, we must ensure our women and men are well-prepared with the knowledge and skills they need to seize the awesome opportunities that currently exist and those that, through innovation and ingenuity, we will create. This year, as we set our eyes on the future and continue to progress this economic platform, **education** will be a primary focus.

No Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were more enthused and inspired by our curling team's Olympic performance than the young people who cheered on their heroes from homes and arenas in communities throughout our province. They cheered, not only to celebrate their team, but also to celebrate themselves and this reaffirmation of their capacity, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to take on the most formidable challenges and succeed.

It is vital to cultivate in young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians both the attitude and the aptitude for success so they are prepared to sustain the growth we are working hard to nurture. We owe it to them to teach them and prove to them that success is not something they have to leave to find. We are spawning success right here where we are.

An ideal arena in which to prepare our young people for success is the classroom. During the past year, My Government consulted with numerous stakeholders in our education system to better understand the obstacles standing in the way of success in the classroom. The obstacles are great, but greater still is My Government's determination to work with our teachers and other key stakeholders to build on our success.

One concern is the teacher allocation formula, which does not appear to work well in current circumstances. Firstly, the formula leads to automatic reductions in teaching resources that are difficult to manage in a way that does not affect program delivery when there are small, marginal changes in enrolment. Secondly, the formula does not harmonize well with My Government's efforts to add back teachers to the resource base in order to target specific priorities, such as reducing class sizes, promoting physical education and wellness, and supporting cultural studies beginning last year and a skilled trades and technology route to graduation for young men and women beginning this year. In this light, the existing formula for distributing teaching resources may not be optimal. Accordingly, to take proper account of demographic changes and changing priorities, My Government will review and if necessary revise the teacher allocation formula to ensure schools have the teaching resources they need to deliver the programs our students need. We must do even more to ensure our schools are resourced adequately so teachers and students are working with the proper educational tools.

Teachers are motivated to help all students to develop the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in school, and in life, regardless of their relative abilities. However, many teachers find it difficult to achieve these goals because of the substantial demands placed on them in today's classroom environment. Inclusion strategies, such as the Individual Support Services Plan, or ISSP, are admirable in their intent, but sometimes the implementation causes an undue burden on school staff. The current model of administering ISSPs imposes significant red tape and documentation requirements on teachers. My Government will review this program in order to make it easier for teachers to deliver inclusive education to children with complex and divergent needs.

Non-teaching supports are also important to strengthen education delivery and ensure students receive the well-rounded and well-grounded education they need to succeed. It is time to take optimal advantage of school councils to enable parents to work collaboratively with schools and with their Government in ways that will enrich the school experience.

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Students are best poised for success when they are healthy and physically fit. Healthy living habits learned early will deliver a lifetime of benefits. It is time to build on last year's investments in physical education by further promoting healthy living among our young people.

As Newfoundland and Labrador's economy grows and large new projects come on-stream, particularly in the energy and mining sectors, the demand for workers with specialized skills will increase. In order to address skills shortages and ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are well-prepared to reap the benefits of the opportunities at their doorstep, My Government will make further investments in programming and planning under the guidance of a Skills Task Force with expertise in market needs. This initiative is in addition to the investments My Government already announced through the White Paper on **Post-secondary Education**, which stabilized funding and froze tuition fees to promote program growth and student access. Further initiatives to be outlined in conjunction with this year's Budget include literacy support, adult basic education, the skilled trades and technology route to high school graduation, women in apprenticeship and new programs at the College of the North Atlantic and Memorial University. Together, these initiatives will revolutionize the delivery, scope and quality of post-secondary education programs in our public college and university and give our people access to the exceptional opportunities that are available to graduates with prized skills in critical trades and technologies.

My Government will also ensure that students in high school have access to reliable information about the wide array of worthwhile career opportunities available in Newfoundland and Labrador to graduates of programs at the College of North Atlantic and at the Grenfell and St. John's campuses and other locations of Memorial University. This information benefits them, and it also benefits the rest of us. The choices our graduates make in large measure determine the degree of benefits our communities and economy derive from the economic diversification and industrial expansion that Newfoundland and Labrador is working hard to develop.

My Government will also, as a beginning, press the Government of Canada to restore post-secondary funding to levels comparable to those of the mid-nineties before deep federal cuts began obstructing growth in our province's public post-secondary system. Ensuring our young people are prepared to lead the world in knowledge and skills development is a national responsibility that our people encourage their new national Government to embrace. My Government will work constructively with the Government of Canada on a wide range of initiatives important to this province, not the least of which is education.

Education is the key to a brighter future. Without question, all of our teachers are windows of opportunity for the students they teach. They reveal to their pupils the kaleidoscope of experiences that have shaped who we are and what we face in Newfoundland and Labrador. Since last year through the new Cultural Connections strategy and starting this year through new history curriculum, we are providing teachers with new opportunities to develop in our young people a deep fascination with our province's unique character. One of the people who inspired and motivated My Government to develop and apply the Cultural Connections strategy was a young music teacher at Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts named Heather McDonald. Ms. McDonald was passionate about amplifying the role of music in the classroom. She not only taught and inspired her students to love Newfoundland and Labrador's cultural opportunities but enabled her students to discover their own hidden talents and showcase them beyond our shores in Toronto, England, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. She led her students in producing an album of Irish and Newfoundland and Labrador music in anticipation of a class appearance in Ireland. Tragically, Ms. McDonald passed away in December, far too young, but having left an incredibly powerful legacy, a legacy that endures through her students and the many who have been inspired by her dedication. She reminds all of us of the supreme role our teachers play in discovering and developing the individual talents of our young people – talents that they, in turn, can build upon for the rest of their lives.

Innovation and Infrastructure

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Education is at the foundation of the research and development revolution that is spawning incredible new opportunities on the cutting edge. Newfoundland and Labrador is swiftly earning a reputation for gold, not only in the athletic arena, but in the technological arena as well. C-CORE at Memorial University recently won a key contract from the European Space Agency to lead a large multinational network of companies and institutes representing Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom in a special homegrown initiative, the "Polar View" program, that will extensively monitor by satellite the sensitive Arctic and Antarctic regions for environmental, economic and security reasons. Similarly, many private companies in our province are also making phenomenal progress, advancing and commercializing new technologies that in many cases were incubated in the laboratories of our post-secondary institutions. Rutter has designed 'black box' data recorders for ships. ICAN has developed marine navigation software and charts. Genoa Design has produced new architectural software via the internet. Cathexis is advancing radio frequency identification technology to revolutionize merchandise tracking. Consilient has pioneered the mobile computer technology the New York Fire Department began using after 9/11. Northstar Technical has developed its Netmind wireless system as well as consoles that Lockheed Martin is using. Blue Line Innovations has developed the PowerCost Monitor™, a powerful real-time direct feedback display device for domestic energy consumers that tells them at a glance, in real-time, how much electricity their homes are using in dollars, cents and kilowatts - information that consumers are using to reduce their energy costs by 10 to 20 per cent. North Atlantic Biopharma has developed a seal oil-based bio-pharmaceutical product used for the medical industry. NewLab Clinical Research conducts research to isolate genetic markers for common human disorders. NovaLipids has developed technology to improve the way medications are processed in the body. Natural Newfoundland Nutraceuticals is bringing together technology in support of the agrifood sector that is not presently available in Atlantic Canada, to develop and produce a range of natural health products. Wholesome Dairy has developed exciting new Good Natured yogurt products. These are just a few of the gold medal successes Newfoundland and Labrador has already achieved.

This year, My Government will introduce an **Innovation Strategy** entitled "Innovation Newfoundland and Labrador: A Blueprint for Prosperity", with initiatives to advance the next wave of success on several frontiers: engineering, information technology, life sciences – key sectors in which innovation means opportunity. Nurturing success means investing in key post-secondary programs in which our province is poised for global leadership: for example, marine, environmental, genetic, geriatric and earth sciences. It means identifying and investing in opportunities to harness scientific and technological advances for commercial and public economic gain. It means marketing our products, our services, our people and our ideas effectively at home and abroad. It means generating the expertise that enables success in key industries such as petroleum engineering, mineral refining and industrial fabrication and design. It means creating a business climate that encourages and rewards investment, diversification, modernization and inventiveness. The new Innovation Strategy will address these opportunities in such a way to foster a culture of entrepreneurialism and act as a catalyst for new businesses and careers to give our people a powerful future firmly grounded right here at home.

My Government's Innovation Strategy is a framework to support strategic high-growth sectors of the economy, such as marine and ocean technology – an area where Newfoundland and Labrador is excelling on the world stage. Supported by world-class R&D infrastructure and unique expertise in areas such as ocean engineering, marine communications, and integrated navigational systems, this sector is demonstrating innovation in product development and international markets.

To build on this momentum, My Government will help fuel growth in the province's ocean technology cluster by enhancing leadership and advancing our capability to develop and commercialize offshore technologies, including the development of a highly technical, integrated Ocean Observing System in the North Atlantic. In collaboration with Rhode Island and other New England States, Ireland and other parts of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador will play a lead role in developing observing systems that support efforts to improve maritime defence and security, marine weather forecasting and warning, environmental conservation, and pollution control.

Innovation in the public sector will be a prime focus of our approach. Already, new ground has been broken through innovations in telemedicine and distance education. Through the new **Office of the Chief Information Officer**, My Government will continue to streamline the flow of information both through and from the public sector, coupling the goals of enhanced efficiency and enhanced openness in order to better meet the needs of our people. Sound investments in information technology will be complemented with sound investments in information management to make the most of that technology. Through enhancements in efficiency, people and businesses will benefit from greater ease in dealing with their government. Furthermore, investments in training through the Public Service Secretariat will also do much to promote a strong professional public service in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Office of the Chief Information Officer will also work with the private information technology sector to ensure the benefits of public sector IT initiatives are spread among many local enterprises. These initiatives will bring tangible benefits to the province by stimulating private sector technological advancement, private sector job creation and economic development. We are proud of our province's technical industries, whose ingenuity is the major reason Newfoundland and Labrador is today a leader in information technology.

Newfoundland and Labrador is also poised to become a leader in energy supply. No area of our public sector is better positioned to harness economic opportunities for the enduring benefit of our people than **Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro**. My Government pledged to expand Hydro's mandate to encompass the broad array of energy sector opportunities that have drawn international attention to our province: not only hydro energy and wind energy but also petroleum energy. Hydro has the ability to harness these resources in ways that will return to our people the kind of benefits that energy corporations in other jurisdictions have returned to their own. In order to make our Crown corporation a competitive player in the international marketplace, My Government will invest in Hydro's financial health, giving it the leverage and liberty to pursue opportunities that will bring new industrial developments and economic wealth to Newfoundland and Labrador. Hydro's work, in concert with the work of Natural Resources, will facilitate many of the initiatives that will be identified in the new comprehensive provincial energy plan.

The proposed Lower Churchill hydro development has the potential to significantly benefit Labrador and the entire province. Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, as directed by My Government, is reviewing the feasibility of development options for this significant clean energy resource. This is phase two of a multi-phase process that was initiated in 2005 with the international request for expressions of interest and proposals, "the EOI process". The objective is to identify all our development and market options, including a Newfoundland and Labrador led project, and then gradually narrow the field to the best options. Work is underway to ensure that all decisions are made from a thoroughly informed perspective. As part of this process, in January Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro made an application for transmission service with Hydro-Québec's transmission division. This application will provide important cost and technical information about accessing electricity markets.

Hydro potential in the Big Land is one of its many *strengths*. **Labrador** also faces unique *challenges*, but again, these challenges are opportunities to prove ourselves capable of turning the corner toward a new era of sustainability and self-reliance. My Government will continue to consult with and work hand-in-hand with the people of Labrador's communities to build on their strengths. Our province's Aboriginal heritage is among its greatest strengths. We congratulate the Inuit people of Labrador as they work to build a brighter future for their communities through their newly-established Nunatsiavut Government – "Our Beautiful Land". Newfoundlanders and Labradorians likewise wish the people of the Innu Nation tremendous success and a brighter future as they work with My Government and the Government of Canada to achieve their own land claims agreement. Our people also support the desire of the Labrador Métis Nation to access federal programs and services for people of Aboriginal descent. There are golden opportunities for Labradorians of all heritages to work together for the greater benefit of all. As our province sets its sights on the many possibilities for progress in Labrador, one significant development opportunity that is a priority is the potential development of the Lower Churchill hydroelectric resource. My Government will continue to consult with Labradorians as we work towards development of this resource.

In Labrador and on the island, the energy sector is one of the many industries that promise strong economic and employment returns on investment. Others that predominate in rural communities and promise significant growth in many regions are **aquaculture, agriculture, forestry and mineral development**. My Government will promote sustainable growth in rural Newfoundland and Labrador by investing strategically in these sectors to advance the development of new opportunities and optimum resource utilization. We will promote strategic growth opportunities in partnership with the private sector and other community stakeholders in rural areas of our province based on the strengths of each region. In many rural areas of our province, value-added wood production, agrifoods, aquaculture and small-scale manufacturing offer solid potential. In other areas, opportunities for four-season tourism development and knowledge-based services are areas for further development. Using our natural resources and innovative approaches to maximize the potential for each region, My Government will promote development opportunities beyond local and provincial markets. Together, we will also work to ensure that we benefit from our natural resources, particularly our important **fish resources**, through increased investments in resource, product and market development. We will also contribute to the recovery and future management of cod, which have been, and will continue to be, vital to our province's future prosperity. We will build upon our commitment and actions to further protect and sustain our natural resources. And we will continue to promote the development of long-term visions and priorities for sustainable regional development – economic, social, cultural and environmental – through the work of the nine Regional Councils and the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat.

Innovation is also promising new returns from other age-old endeavours, particularly in our **cultural industries**. For centuries, our people have told stories, made music, crafted art and performed plays for one another's enjoyment and enrichment. This heritage that defines us also empowers us to reap economic returns. The global music, publishing and film industries generate untold billions of dollars each year, and we are beginning to get a sizeable piece of the action as our musicians, authors, actors and artists become more widely recognized for their artistic expression and more inventive in capitalizing on their skills. My Government this year will build on last year's cultural initiatives through further strategic investments in our cultural sector and by adopting the province's first Strategic Cultural Plan. This Plan will provide a foundation for the sound preservation and management of our cultural resources

and strategic support for the further development of the province's cultural sector. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are especially proud this year to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, our province's leader in representing, promoting and nurturing the many artists who call Newfoundland and Labrador home.

A thriving cultural sector is one of the attractions that lures tourists to our shores, but so too is our scenic beauty and vibrant lifestyle. Effectively promoting our strengths means aggressively promoting our uniqueness in a competitive marketplace. To that end, My Government will bolster the provincial tourism marketing budget and promote **tourism** growth through initiatives that identify and employ our strengths for maximum effect. The goal is to bring even more visitors to our communities to enjoy the wonderful hospitality and exceptional experiences that so many have boasted about in the past. Enhancing the province's lure also means investing in historic sites, natural heritage parks, environment and conservation initiatives, recreational opportunities and various events to make the visit all the more rewarding.

My Government initiated a number of important strategies that involve participation and physical activity. An important part of addressing these challenges is how we increase and encourage recreational activities and sport participation. My Government will develop a Recreation and Sport Strategy this year that will look at the issues, the opportunities and the directions we must take to support recreation and sport throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Not only tourists but also investors are lured to our shores by the promise of opportunity. It is to our advantage to lure more and retain more of those whose presence will make our province stronger. My Government's branding initiative is a **business**-savvy means of melding our diverse voices into a uniquely powerful voice for maximum effect in the crowded and noisy international marketplace. The brand is not only a convenient bandwagon on which smaller players can hitch a ride in national and international circles, but also a vehicle for attracting new investors to the local scene where their money can fuel the growth our province is seeking. A brand will enhance our province's professional image and do a great deal to position who we are, what we are offering in tourism, culture and business, and where we are going in strategic sectors including fisheries, the environment and many others. Understanding that

investors are also attracted by a friendly business climate, My Government will continue over the year ahead to identify innovative ways to streamline the regulatory process and cut red tape in ways that enhance the attractiveness of a province that is already winning accolades in national circles for its attitude and approach to business.

Our attractiveness to investors is enhanced even more through strategic investments in **infrastructure**. Existing infrastructure, including roads and public buildings, has been eroding throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for decades. Addressing the wide assortment of costly needs responsibly over time requires expert information and careful fiscal balancing. For this reason, My Government initiated a comprehensive infrastructure strategy to evaluate the needs and identify ways and means of meeting them. Last year, My Government made a record investment in the Provincial Roads Program, negotiated an expansion of the National Highway System in this province and moved the Trans-Labrador Highway nearer to completion. My Government this year will continue to invest strategically in transportation infrastructure, municipal capital works initiatives and improvements in government services that together will reinforce our province's commitment to nurture stronger, more-sustainable rural communities. Enhancements in education and health care infrastructure will promote the delivery of strong social programs. The magnitude of the demand is such that meeting it will take some time, but My Government will move ahead boldly with a keen understanding of the relation between reliable infrastructure and our attractiveness to investors, and also, of course, with a clear appreciation of the capacity of infrastructure work to generate strong economic activity on its own and to improve the lives of our people in numerous ways.

Including the $41.7-million commitment this year to continue work on the Trans-Labrador Highway, My Government will proceed this year with a wide range of initiatives to strengthen Labrador totaling some $47.3 million in this year's budget with new infrastructure commitments totaling over $175 million. These include a $1.9-million provincial contribution to proceed with a performance space in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; money to help improve facility arrangements for the College of the North Atlantic in Labrador West and to extend the College's campus in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; planning for a new $25-million health centre in Labrador West and a new $17.5-million long-term care centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; and improved kidney dialysis services in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Social Sustainability

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Strong economic growth enriches a government's ability to invest in our provincial **health care** system. In our province today, we are faced with an aging population, outdated health infrastructure and growing public expectations, resulting in increased demands on our health care system. Over the last two years, My Government made strategic health care investments that will not only address future infrastructure needs but also help to address new health care demands. We have improved access to key health care services, and we will continue to respond to the health care needs of our seniors, our children and youth, and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Statistics Canada estimates that by 2021, Newfoundland and Labrador will have the highest proportion of seniors in the country. My Government will plan now to ensure that the needs of our seniors are anticipated and met. Ongoing consultations with seniors will result in the development of a new Healthy Aging Framework for our province.

My Government recently launched a new Provincial Wellness Strategy, a plan which focuses on educating the public about the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle and supporting them in improving overall health and wellness. Our new Mental Health and Addictions Policy framework sets out My Government's long-term commitment to create a more-responsive system that focuses on the importance of prevention of addictions and other mental health problems.

My Government will act on its commitment to continued health promotion, disease prevention and protection of the public. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are being diagnosed with preventable diseases that could be avoided through early detection. My Government will continue to educate the public on the importance of screening and will invest in new technology to detect diseases before they spread. The threat of a potential influenza pandemic is a public concern around the world. My Government's planning is now underway to increase public health capacity and our ability to respond to the potential implications of an influenza pandemic, should

the need arise. New investments will enhance capacity at the regional level and throughout government to ensure that our population is protected.

The well-being of women, children, Aboriginal women, youth, seniors and other vulnerable populations is compromised, not only by health challenges, but also by the violence they experience in their homes and in their communities. New investments this year will strengthen and broaden My Government's commitments to **violence prevention** with the implementation of a six-year plan, *Taking Action Against Violence - 2012*. This plan has been developed by the Women's Policy Office from consultations with community groups that deal with the effects of violence on individuals and families. The plan of action includes strategies to enhance the work of community groups, Aboriginal organizations and women to prevent violence. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that those vulnerable to violence feel safe and protected in their homes and communities.

My Government's commitment to advancing the **status of women** in Newfoundland and Labrador will ensure they share equitably in the social and economic benefits of our society. My Government will integrate women's voices and perspectives, including those of Aboriginal women, when formulating public policy. Beginning this year, special measures will increase women's opportunities to acquire positions in trades and in nontraditional occupations and sectors of our society. Women's participation in leadership and decision making will be advanced.

As our province turns the corner economically, we must empower people to realize their full potential. We cannot forget those who need help most. Poverty often engenders a lower quality of life, poor nutrition, poor health, poor educational opportunities, poor employment prospects and a feeling of being excluded from society. Reducing poverty and its effects on children in particular has been a key goal of My Government. Guided by a strong social conscience, My Government will advance a **poverty reduction** agenda by implementing a range of initiatives that are designed to address both the consequences and the causes of poverty. These initiatives will flow from a long-term poverty strategy that includes policies and measures that will have the greatest impact on those living in poverty and work in the longer term to prevent poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador. All of us benefit when poverty

is reduced. Reducing poverty is not only about improving the well-being and quality of life of those who currently struggle to afford basic necessities. Poverty reduction is also about ensuring a strong and prosperous future for our province. Addressing poverty is necessary to improve our economy and to promote an inclusive society. All men and women must be able to participate fully in the social and economic benefits of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We cannot forget those people who rely on the social safety net because they cannot work due to disability or other circumstances. My government's poverty reduction strategy will include measures to ensure that these residents of the province receive services in a dignified manner that will help enable them to participate in society.

The poverty reduction strategy will also help those who are eager to become more self-reliant. The best long-term solution to impoverishment for many people is a good job, and the best way to get a good job is to get a solid education. However, there exist in our society many structural disincentives and barriers to employment for those who rely on social assistance. Reducing the disincentives to employment and increasing the inclusiveness of our education system will enable more people to enter the workforce and become more self-reliant. Youth, women and other vulnerable groups are a particular focus. Sadly, last year, forty-seven percent of new applicants for social assistance were young people. For many of them, one of the main barriers is the lack of an adequate educational foundation. My Government will build upon measures designed to encourage students to stay in school and find ways to help them further their education and develop skills that will enable them to find good jobs and become self-reliant.

While most of these initiatives will also benefit the Aboriginal people of our province, My Government will continue to recognize that Aboriginal peoples and their communities have particular needs and that the Government of Canada has a special role to play in addressing those needs. As already stated, My Government will remain committed to the settlement and implementation of land claims and self-government agreements that will provide Aboriginal peoples with the tools and resources they need to develop healthy and self-reliant communities. My Government will also work with the Government of Canada to ensure the Aboriginal peoples of this province

receive maximum benefit from the initiatives arising from the historic meeting among First Ministers and national Aboriginal leaders in Kelowna last November. My Government will continue to assist people of Aboriginal descent to gain full access to federal Aboriginal programs and services. My Government will advance issues of importance to Aboriginal women as identified at the recent Aboriginal Women's conference in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and as my First Minister did in Kelowna. My Government will also continue the process of addressing issues identified in the federally-commissioned report on Innu education, commonly known as the Philpott report.

Education is the foundation of personal self-reliance just as it is the foundation of our collective self-reliance. The bold new attitude that is driving our citizens and My Government to take on Olympic-size challenges with confidence can also enable individuals to face personal challenges and achieve personal triumphs. We all must work together to help empower our poorest citizens to share productively in the rewards of success. We all must work together to help remove the obstacles that stand in their way and inspire them and enable them to seize the opportunities around us. Success may not come without an Olympic-size effort, but when we really understand what we are truly capable of achieving and helping others to achieve, we no longer see that effort as an exercise in futility. We see clearly the possibility of victory. We catch a vision of triumph. We glimpse the glitter of the gold, and we know the dream that drives us is worth the effort.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly: Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new Session.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.

www.gov.nl.ca/thronespeech

GOVERNMENT OF
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